



Dear Representative, Chair Youkim

I am writing asking for support for HF795/SF665. I work in our day treatment program in Olmsted County with clients who are seeking a higher level of mental health support.

Access to extended school year for the clients in our day treatment program is vital and would give them access to necessary programming. Many of our clients miss school time in order to access the intensive mental health services that are much needed. Having access to extended school year would allow them to catch up on missed educational opportunities and would give them access to transportation to the day treatment program on days school is not typically in session.

I have been working in the day treatment setting for over three years and have directly observed the difficulties families face when having to choose between mental health services and educational services for their children. Prior to starting our program, many of the clients have not been successful in the school setting, by getting suspended, or simply not engaging. I believe that when clients seek out mental health services they should not be faced with a choice of school or mental health services. I have observed that some of our referrals will choose not to attend day treatment due to the worries of their child getting behind in school.

Our program runs Monday through Friday for 3 hours, and many caregivers worry about the impacts of missing school on their child's education. I believe that giving these clients access to an extended school year, will allow caregivers to seek these mental health services without the worry of their child getting behind in school. Many of the intensive mental health programs that incorporate schooling into their services have very long waitlists, and our day treatment program's goal is to assist with these clients getting mental health services before out of home placements are required. I have observed first hand that a client may not be as successful in the school setting if their mental health is not a priority. If this passes, it will allow families to make decisions for their child's mental health that will overall benefit their success in the school setting. In addition, families will not feel like they have to choose between their child's education and mental health.

Thank you for considering,

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Day Treatment Coordinator